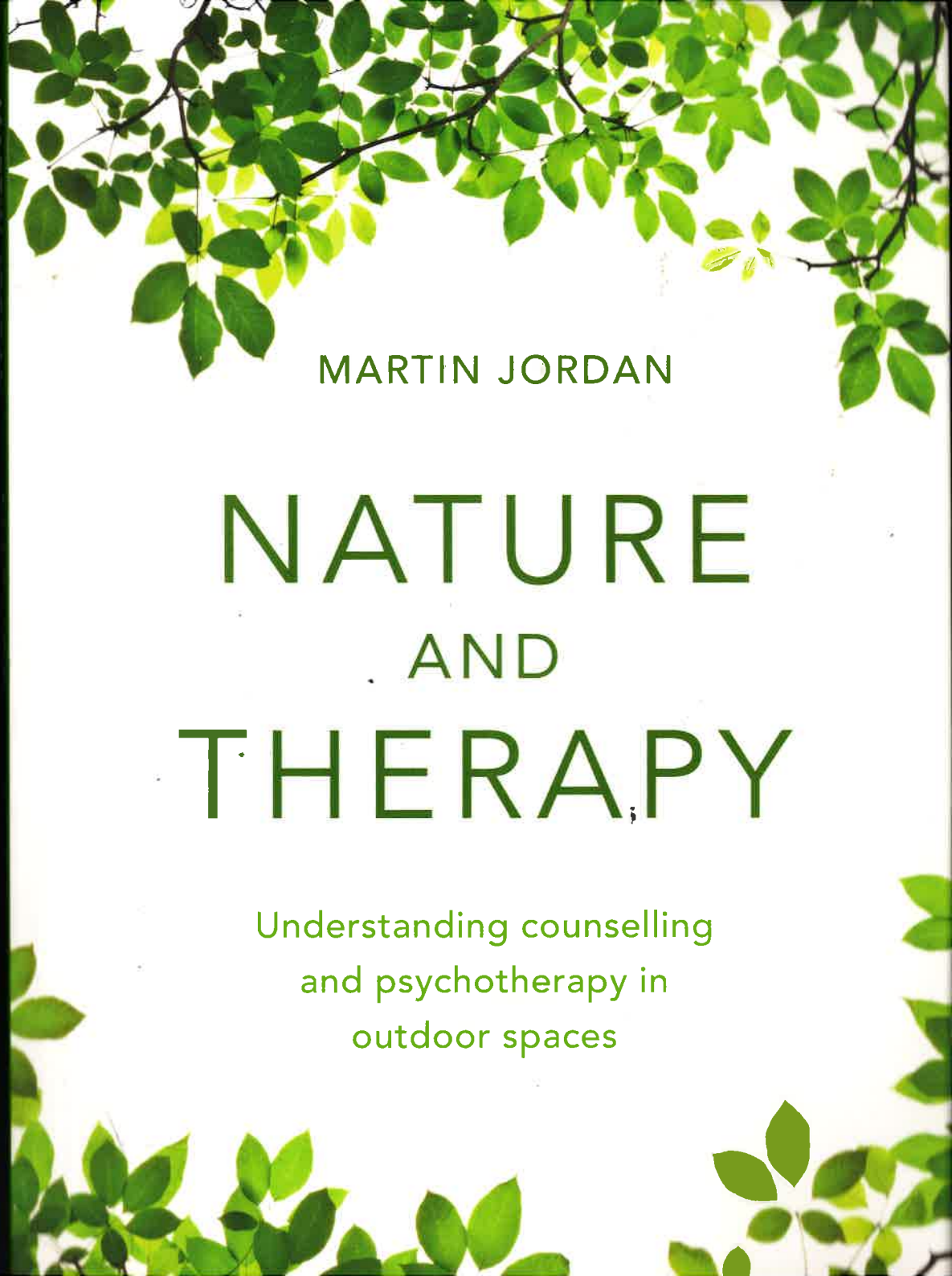

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NATURE AND THERAPY

Understanding counselling and psychotherapy in outdoor spaces

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To Cara, Gemma and Mary with all my love

Introduction

In recent decades interest has grown in the relationship between our contact with the natural world and its effect on our emotional well-being. In discussions with family, friends and colleagues it would be hard not to find somebody who could talk about their relationship with the natural world, and the healing and beneficial effects it had upon them. It might be through activities in nature such as walking, cycling, camping or climbing, or they might talk about their enjoyment of gardening and growing plants and vegetables. They might speak about the impact of particular places they had visited locally, or on travels further afield, places that continue to have or have had a profound and healing effect on them. They might even use the language of spirituality or existentialism, saying that these experiences create a deeper sense of connection with the more-than-human world. They might express how their connection to nature allowed them to see their place in the universe as part of a greater interconnected whole. Whatever the experience, there is a large body of people for whom contact with nature is very important. In talking to people about their relationship to nature, there might also be anxieties around what is happening to the natural world: resource depletion, global warming, unfolding natural catastrophes, and the impact of overpopulation and environmental degradation. Their emotional reaction to this may cause a sense of depression and hopelessness, a fear that we are sleepwalking into a catastrophe.

There may also be people who you know or see in your clinical practice as a therapist, who suffer from seasonal affective disorders. As summer starts to fade, the nights draw in, trees shed their leaves, and the temperature drops, some people experience the shift towards winter and the shortening of days with a mild sense of unease. For others, this seasonal process may cause bigger shifts in their mood and well-being and result in more dramatic changes in their mental health, possibly requiring clinical support. It is clear that our relationship with nature (or lack of it) has an effect on our emotional and psychological well-being. Climate change now presents us with some very real environmental and psychological threats to our well-being. Some therapists have taken the problems that climate change presents us with as the central focus of their therapeutic and campaigning work. Seeing psychological and social transformation as interlinked, they position the role of counselling and psychotherapy as central in supporting people to make the shifts

towards a more sustainable society and dealing with the emotional and psychological fallout from unsustainable ways of living.

This book aims to explore how this relationship to nature which gives rise to both positive and potentially negative feeling can be developed in the context of counselling and psychotherapy. At the time of writing this book, a new introduction to counselling has been published (McLeod 2013) which has a whole chapter dedicated to therapy in nature and using the outdoor environment for therapy. This is a major milestone and represents just how far the field has come and is developing. This book aims to make a contribution to the field, expanding understanding of how the practice and process of counselling and psychotherapy work in an outdoor natural setting.

My personal journey

Due to my personal experience of the healing effects of nature and my training as a therapist, I wanted to start to conduct psychotherapy outdoors, to take my clients into natural spaces such as parks, fields, woods and more mountainous terrain. I found that very little had been written about this specific activity: counselling and psychotherapy in outdoor natural contexts. Although there was a field of practice called adventure therapy and wilderness therapy, which sat alongside the emerging fields of ecotherapy and ecopsychology, there was no specific activity which could clearly be seen as counselling and psychotherapy in nature. As I went out into nature to practise psychotherapy, I struggled to understand how my training and practice indoors could transfer outdoors. I encountered a range of problems both practical and philosophical, raising big questions about what underpinning knowledge and understanding I could draw upon to inform my psychotherapy practice in the outdoors.

When I initially started to think about moving outside of the therapy room, I encountered a range of practical issues, including the weather, terrain and the physical safety of both myself and my clients. Alongside this I also encountered frame-based tensions of confidentiality, timing and conducting the process of therapy outside the confines of two chairs in a room. Concurrently with this I was wrestling with theoretical issues around how to understand the role the outside environment, particularly the natural world, played in the therapeutic process. I struggled to understand how the developmental and relational nature of psychological distress, as presented to me in narrative form and understood through processes such as transference and countertransference within the confines of the therapy room, translated to a natural outdoor space.

My own relationship to the outdoors and the natural world has developed over a number of years. From a young age I would go out into nature in the fields around my home in Essex to feel at peace and to escape tensions at home with my parents. I spent a lot of time alone on my bike cycling round the country lanes, going out to marshland and visiting the estuaries and rivers near where I lived. I also spent time with friends lighting fires and climbing trees. This all seemed natural as a

child; the natural world was integral to much of my childhood play. As a teenager I spent less time in nature, but enjoyed being outdoors working on building sites and engaging in the physicality of work, digging holes and lifting and carrying building materials. At university I became interested in indigenous forms of healing and was lucky to study a course on shamanism taught by Brian Bates at the University of Sussex (Bates 1984) which fuelled my interest in Native American cosmology and healing practices. When I worked in a day centre with adults with learning disabilities I was involved in a project growing vegetables and working on the land where we had an allotment. As I trained as a therapist I concurrently engaged in a men's group who met in woodland and did sweat lodges and other practices of connection to nature. Due to this experience and my interest in Native American ideas I trained as a 'vision fast' facilitator at the School of Lost Borders (www.schooloflostborders.org). I have written about this experience (Jordan 2005), which had a powerful psychological effect on me, not wholly positive. All of these experiences grew into a personal process of enquiry whereby I sought to attempt to bring these interests to bear on my therapy training and practice. In 2007 I started to take both individual clients and groups outdoors into natural spaces in order to begin to try to work therapeutically with them.

In terms of moving outdoors there was a distinction between the three types of therapy that I practised. One was a traditional one-to-one set-up conducted on a weekly basis at a regular time and at the same place. The other work I engaged in was over a long weekend (from Friday to Sunday) with a group of up to ten participants, where we camped, ate and slept in the same vicinity. The context of these weekends varied from remote mountains in North Wales, to hill walking in the Peak District, to woodlands in the East Sussex countryside. I co-ran these workshops with another therapist. Finally I ran one-day workshops exploring the therapeutic potential of the natural world, which I called 'ecotherapy'. Both the weekends and day workshops predominantly used experiential exercises and group reflections to facilitate participants' connections and emotional experiences in relation to the natural spaces we were in.

When I moved outside in my one-to-one therapy, I experienced a range of challenges, initially focused around the practicalities. I worried about confidentiality, particularly in public outdoor spaces such as parks; this was less of an issue in more remote terrain such as hills and mountains, but still a possibility. To resolve this issue I found an outdoor space which mirrored the indoor space: a willow dome situated within a managed wild garden space (Figure 1); it was somewhere with an entrance where I could set up two chairs and have some control over who entered the space by putting up signs saying 'workshop in

Figure 1 The willow dome space where I practise one-to-one work (Photo: Author)

progress, do not disturb'. This enabled me to relax and be able to focus on the therapy without fear of interruption, although it was not failsafe, and occasionally I had to intervene when someone ignored the signs and entered the location. Through this process of trial and error I learnt to rethink the therapeutic contract, accounting for some of the issues in working in an outdoor terrain. These included what to do if it rains (sit under umbrellas or tarpaulin), or if it is too cold (regularly check with the client about levels of comfort), or if someone interrupts the work. I managed to account for this, both in written form via a contract for outdoor work, and I also verbally agreed with clients what to do in certain contingencies such as interruptions (I would get up and engage the person before they entered the willow dome and head them off).

When I initially went outdoors to conduct counselling I felt overwhelmed by the sensory overload of the moving space we encountered. The space we were in felt alive and vibrant, compared to the static space of the indoor room, which took some getting used to. Initially I found that I lost the clear threads of transference and counter transference that seemed more apparent within the indoor room space. In my one-to-one therapy work I dealt with this issue by sitting in the contained space of the willow dome. To some extent this mimicked the room space I was used to and meant that my ability to focus increased.

However at the same time I felt a growing incongruence with being in the outdoor space. If it was so like the indoor space, why go outdoors? If I wasn't foregrounding the natural world as an intrinsic part of the process, what was the point? Some of these issues have lessened as I have continued to work one to one in this outdoor space. One client has continued to stay with the process over subsequent years and as part of our work we have questioned and continued to discuss why go outdoors? What has always felt important for the counselling work I do is to verbally explore the client's inner object-relational world. When I questioned my client about how sitting in the context was working for her, she answered that she found the context of nature relaxing and healing. What has developed in this one-to-one work is that my client can choose where to sit in the wild garden space around the willow dome. These choices and movements have mirrored her inner emotions and have allowed us more freedom than in an indoor space. I also now regularly walk and talk with my clients, conducting sessions whilst walking in natural locations.

My own practice in this context has helped me understand the work on different levels. Rather than a therapeutic nature 'out there' to connect to, there has been a more subtle movement between inner and outer worlds that has enhanced the work and allowed me to think beyond the confines of focusing either entirely on inner subjective feelings or solely on the outside. Through this experience and my theoretical reading, I became interested in the space between subjectivity and objectivity and how it can be understood in outdoor therapy experiences. In the same way I became interested in the process of therapy as movement, and how this movement could be understood both as an interior and exterior process.

When I conducted group work over long weekends, I struggled in different ways. A series of challenges came to the fore as part of working therapeutically outdoors

in a wider range of contexts. Certain environments presented physical risks such as rough terrain and steep ground with the potential for exposure to more hazardous weather. If I had been operating within an adventure therapy process then these issues would have become challenges that clients could overcome, mirroring internal difficulties that needed to be addressed. At times, for example camping in high winds, things became quite challenging. However the process of these weekends was much more focused on therapeutic relationships, and the difficult weather became a phenomenon that mirrored internal relational processes, provoking emotional responses within participants. The idea that 'you can't control the weather' mirrored the process that we cannot always control the emotional weather of our lives and relationships. Other natural phenomena provoked existential concerns about seeing ourselves as a small part in a wider evolving universe. However, for me, the most challenging aspect of these weekends was managing the therapeutic process of the group alongside the physical issues of camping in difficult terrain: I felt I had to wear two hats, sometimes at odds with one another. On one weekend we were using a chemical toilet as no toilet facilities existed, and at the end of the weekend I had to literally deal with the group's shit! I found these physical as well as emotional aspects of the weekend exhausting. By being with the group over a long weekend I also found my own role shifted and changed as well as the affective spaces the group inhabited. At times we were in a designated therapeutic space, sharing experiences in a circle, while at other times we were in social spaces eating and talking. I struggled with how to negotiate these spaces and what role I had at different times in relation to the group: therapist, guide, first aider, 'waste manager', cook, etc. Different geographical contexts also felt different: woods and mountains have the capacity to evoke different affective processes. The outdoor environment has the capacity to mobilise different affects in relation to internal worlds, for example woodland environments can feel more holding and containing.

The ecotherapy days allowed me to focus specifically on the therapeutic effects of contact with the natural world. Alongside presenting issues of confidentiality, weather, physical comfort, etc., I began to question 'what is nature?' as the space we were in (I used the willow dome for the majority of these workshops) was more of a hybrid version, with paths, managed woodland and parks, fences, allotments and horticultural projects, none of which evoked a 'pure' natural context. I started to research this area and developed through my reading the concept of an 'emerging post-nature' (Anderson 2009), which seemed to fit more with what I was experiencing. These reflective experiences, coupled with the theoretical readings and challenges I encountered, have all contributed to the interpretive lens I brought to writing this book.

As part of this process I sought out others who were trying to work therapeutically in nature. I joined peer groups of interested practitioners who were working in a range of contexts attempting to utilise the therapeutic potential of nature. Through these meetings I met another psychotherapist, Hayley Marshall, who like me was attempting to take her therapeutic practice outdoors. We have spent the

last six years talking about this process and the therapeutic work with our clients, trying to figure out what was happening in the new contexts and how the therapeutic process and relationship shifted and changed in an outdoor setting. This culminated in an article we wrote (Jordan and Marshall 2010) which discussed how we saw the therapeutic frame and therapeutic process working in this new setting. This book is both my personal account of this work and also a continuation of my work with Hayley and others involved in understanding counselling and psychotherapy outdoors, including members of the Counselling and Psychotherapy Outdoors group (see www.outdoortherapy.org.uk).

Map of the book and chapters

Chapter 1 looks at the evidence and literature that support the idea of nature as a healing space. The three main theories from environmental psychology are covered here: the Biophilia Hypothesis, attention restoration theory and the psycho-evolutionary theory of stress reduction. The evolution of the green care movement is discussed and the growing position of counselling in nature as both aligned and unique in green care is outlined. Taking a broader definition of health and well-being, links are made between the growing theoretical movement of ecopsychology and how human health is intrinsically linked to planetary health. In doing this I discuss how important reconnective practices such as conducting therapy in nature are in understanding ecopsychology's project of reconnection to nature as central to mental health, and how disconnection may be at the root of some forms of mental distress. In the second part of this chapter I move into a fuller philosophical and theoretical discussion around the question of what is nature? I see this as fundamental to understanding a position for nature that places it as central to why therapeutic work should be conducted outdoors, seeing human and nature located in a reciprocal process of relationality. Links are made between understanding nature as an unfolding, vital, dynamic process, both material and immanent, and how this might link to newer forms of understanding of the role of vitality in psychotherapy.

In Chapter 2, I explore the field of nature-based therapies. There are particular approaches to working therapeutically outdoors which provide a lot of useful insight; writings from the Natural Growth Project (Linden and Grut 2002), Nature Therapy (Berger 2006) and Nature Guided Therapy (Burns 1998) all provide theoretical and case discussion which can inform ways of working outdoors. There is also a growing and very informative body of literature emerging from the field of ecotherapy. However there are some specific areas in the literature that are not covered fully or in enough depth to support a therapist who, trained to work indoors, wants to understand the unique aspects of holding a therapeutic frame in an outdoor context and certain aspects of how the therapeutic relationship and process are affected by the move outside. The following chapters address this gap in understanding.

Chapter 3 looks at the therapeutic relationship from the perspective of relational psychotherapy. The relational approach offers a vehicle through which factors such as transference and counter transference and change processes can be understood in an outdoor context. Concepts such as 'implicit relational knowing' and 'moments of meeting' offer a way of understanding the therapeutic process and how it is affected within a dynamic moving environment. A case example is given to illustrate aspects of the unfolding therapeutic relationship within the outdoors; attachment patterns are explored and how they link to understanding of human–nature relationships. The chapter concludes by exploring the concept of nature as a transitional object and includes a case example to illustrate this.

In Chapter 4, I look at three central concepts in understanding therapeutic processes in nature. Participation in either active or passive forms helps us to understand how the experience of nature can be therapeutic on a number of levels and how participative processes can be utilised for therapeutic purposes. I then explore how projective processes, in particular the use of arts and metaphors, can be utilised to explore therapeutic material when conducting therapy outdoors. Finally I discuss the importance of both personal and transpersonal processes, how they link to seasonal and a deeper spiritual engagement with nature that can have a powerful therapeutic effect.

In Chapter 5, I look at some central practice issues in conducting counselling and psychotherapy outdoors in a safe, ethical and competent way. I look at the importance of the therapeutic boundaries in outdoor work and the importance of the psychological capability of the therapist in their ability to hold boundaries appropriately outside of the safety of the room context. In exploring the centrality of the frame, I outline how the frame shifts when moving into an outdoor natural setting. Assessing clients for their appropriateness for outdoor therapy is important and this is explored by giving a case example looking at factors important in clients' suitability for working in nature. I also outline the adaptions needed to the therapeutic contract and how to set up the pragmatics in an outdoor space, thinking about how to begin and end sessions. This is particularly important where the therapeutic space is more 'public' and potentially much less contained than it would be in a room setting. Confidentiality is then explored as a central issue and concern for outdoor therapy; this needs to be negotiated and discussed in contracting with clients for outdoor work and thinking about the impact of the weather on sessions. Finally I look at the importance of health and safety outdoors and some important factors to consider when assessing risks and maintaining both physical and psychological safety.

In Chapter 6, I review therapists' experiences in taking their therapeutic practice outdoors. This is done through reference to research interviews undertaken as part of a project exploring therapists' experiences of working outdoors. A central starting place and an important aspect of the therapeutic rationale for wanting to work outdoors, is the role of the natural world in the emotional and psychological life of the therapist. Several therapists had a strong and enduring history of going into natural spaces to restore themselves and to find emotional and spiritual solace. Some therapists were driven by a need to take on issues in relation to the current environmental crisis, seeing their therapeutic work as strongly linked to enabling

people to develop a more ecological sense of themselves and their relationships. I look at how in taking their work outdoors therapists experienced anxieties, feeling they were breaking the rules of therapy and being transgressive; others worried about how to contain the work and how to keep it safe, both emotionally and physically. Some therapists struggled to understand the greater multidimensional nature of working outdoors and how to translate their predominantly indoor-based training into a new setting. Finally I look at how two therapists had experienced the shift and the unique perspectives they brought to understanding their work in this new setting. The stories are both unique in the therapists' passion and interest in moving outdoors, but at the same time they convey some of the joys and challenges faced by most therapists when they attempt to begin practising outdoors.

In Chapter 7, I look at ways in which a therapist can develop their own therapeutic relationship with nature. By exploring their historical relationship with nature and the emotional role it has played in their life, a therapist interested in working outdoors can begin to translate their own experience in order to develop a rationale for taking therapeutic work into nature. Several exercises are outlined to develop an engagement with nature through both the senses and the therapist's emotional life. Making reference back to Chapter 4 on therapeutic processes, I suggest ways in which the therapist can explore participative, projective and transpersonal therapeutic process through a range of experiential exercises.

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Chapter 1

The healing effects of nature – why go outdoors?

One of the central issues in developing a therapeutic rationale for taking therapy outdoors is an understanding of the positive psychological effects of nature on human well-being. First I will look at three theories that locate nature's healing effects within a scientific evidence base and which have been referred to extensively in the literature. These theories attempt to capture, in empirical language and concepts, the 'feeling' of what nature does for us in terms of well-being and reduction in stress, and why we may be hard-wired in evolutionary terms to seek contact with the natural world. I will then review some supporting literature in terms of the green care movement and discuss the emerging field of ecopsychology. Ecopsychology positions relationships with nature within a reciprocal process which is intrinsically linked to mental health.

The Biophilia Hypothesis

A starting point for articulating the human–nature relationship has been the assertion of the Biophilia Hypothesis (Wilson 1984). The Biophilia Hypothesis is defined as the innate tendency to focus on life and life-like processes. Wilson believed that we were biologically programmed in terms of genetics to seek kinship with the more-than-human world. The Biophilia Hypothesis suggests human identity and personal fulfilment somehow depend on our relationship to nature. The human need for nature is linked not just to the material exploitation of the environment but also to the influence the natural world has on our emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, and even spiritual development. In further elaborating the Biophilia Hypothesis, Kellert (1993) points to the relationship between the historical development of the self, the natural environment and our genetic evolution as interdependent – that this evolutionary connection somehow resides in our genes. The Biophilia Hypothesis is often used to support the idea of an evolutionary relationship with nature that is not purely biological but is linked to psychology and identity.

Attention Restoration Theory (ART)

Focusing on the process of attention, Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) and Kaplan (1995) have researched the restorative effects of the natural environment, resulting in 'Attention Restoration Theory'. They undertook research which explored the psychological effects of being in both wilderness and nearby nature such as parks and woodland. Taking William James's concept of voluntary and involuntary attention, they explore how 'directed' attention which involves sustained concentration in a task whilst holding other distracting tasks at bay (for example whilst I am trying to write this at my computer I am wrestling with two distractions, whether I should make myself a coffee or whether I should walk the dog) affects us on a psychological level. They propose that these distractions have to be blocked out, and this causes tiredness and depletion in higher cognitive functioning. Being in natural environments involves a different sort of cognitive functioning, indirect attention or what is termed 'soft' fascination (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Soft fascination is maintained in an aesthetic and sensory contact with the natural world, by being away from the routines of our day-to-day life, and this needs to be compatible with our expectations of the trip and experience. This explains why not all trips into nature may be restorative, particularly if the weather turns bad or we get lost. For attention and restoration to occur, certain things need to be present in order for the restorative effects to be felt: being away from everyday work, access to complex ecosystems, trails and paths for exploration. The 'extent' of these environments in providing diversity and scope which engage us is important. This engagement then provides the psychological effect of fascination in relation to animals, birds, trees, plants and views. When the person partakes in compatible activities such as walking, bird watching and fishing, this all leads to a feeling of well-being and a felt restoration of attention and capacity. Overall the theory clearly outlines how contact with both wilderness and nearby natural environments allows us to feel restored and able to return to more complex urban environments.

Psychoevolutionary theory of stress reduction

In his classic paper on a view from a hospital window, Roger Ulrich (1984) compared the recovery of patients who had a view of a blank hospital wall with those who could see trees from their hospital beds. Data were analysed over a ten-year period on the duration of stay in hospital post-operatively for those recovering from gall bladder operations; perhaps unsurprisingly those who had a view of the trees had shorter stays in the hospital. Ulrich (1983) saw visual properties of natural environments, such as complexity and depth, as important, with a number of elements providing stimulation, such as an array of plants. A deflected vista – such as open savannah-like environments – is important, as is the presence of water. This environment needs to be appraised as one where threat is absent or negligible. All of these qualities are thought to rapidly evoke automatic positive affective and parasympathetic physiological responses with associated feelings of calmness, relaxedness, pleasantness and fascination (Ulrich 1983).

In summary, both Kaplan's and Ulrich's research has driven the development of restorative health environments such as the importance of placing gardens in hospitals and other places. There has been a growing body of research, particularly in Scandinavia, which has explored the design and implementation of rehabilitation gardens aiming to promote recovery from mental health problems such as stress and burnout (Stigsdotter and Grahn 2003).

What these different theories point to is the importance of nature in provoking an aesthetic and affective response which is positive and beneficial to human health in a number of ways: reducing stress, restoring attention, promoting well-being. It also highlights how contact with nature is driven by an unfolding evolutionary process linked to brain chemistry and genes which is essential for human survival.

Recent research on the effects of nature on brain chemistry has been emerging from Japan. This research, exploring the effect of Shinrin-Yoku (*taking the atmosphere of the forest*) on physiology, found that subjects experienced lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol after walks in the forest compared to walks in the laboratory (Tsunetsugu et al. 2007; Lee et al. 2011). This and other research coming from Chiba University, Centre for the Environment, in Japan, also found that subjects reported a sense of increased vigour and aliveness, and highlights nature's role in promoting a sense of psychological vitality (Selhub and Logan 2012).

There is a growing evidence base that points towards the role of nature and its preventative and curative effects. Frumkin (2012) has reviewed the current research in a number of areas in relation to clinical epidemiology – what determines health and disease in human populations. The research underlines the importance of contact with animals and the role of pets in human health and well-being, alongside the importance of plants, landscapes, and wilderness experiences. But Frumkin argues that we should treat this evidence with caution as there are still some questions that need to be answered more fully: for example, through what mechanisms does nature contact improve health and well-being? What forms of nature contact are most effective? What specific groups might benefit? He asks the question that is relevant for this book: does psychotherapy that employs nature (i.e. ecotherapy) have an empirical basis? His argument is that more empirical research needs to be undertaken to establish and support the role of nature in psychological health, and the effectiveness of approaches such as ecotherapy in utilising nature in the therapeutic process.

The green care movement

Taking counselling and psychotherapy outdoors can be located in a broad movement that has been growing over the past decades. This movement seeks to enlist the context and processes of the natural world in order to promote physical and psychological well-being, as well as recovery from physical and mental ill health. The 'green care movement' includes a number of interventions such as therapeutic horticulture, animal-assisted therapy, care farming, green exercise and

wilderness therapy. Some of these activities have been brought together under the banner of 'ecotherapy', a term encompassing a broad range of therapy interventions aimed at intervening in mental health issues and promoting good mental health through contact with nature. A recent report 'Green Care: A Conceptual Framework' (Sempik et al. 2010) defines green care as a useful phrase summarising a wide range of both self-help and therapy programmes. The document aims to map out the different aspects of the potential for green care. The natural world is the framework within which green care takes place and is in this sense the common denominator amongst a wide variety of approaches and interventions. In the report Sempik et al. (2010) make a distinction between the active components of the majority of green care approaches like horticultural therapy and the 'passive' experiencing of nature which may not necessarily be green care. The report highlights the fact that there is plenty of research evidence to demonstrate correlations between well-being and green care settings but a lack of research to demonstrate actual cause and effect relationships between green care interventions and health and well-being.

This book situates itself within this broad movement seeking to further understand the therapeutic potential of nature, but at the same time locates counselling and psychotherapy as a unique therapeutic intervention within nature. Green care encompasses a broad range of 'care' interventions, and while these approaches are valuable in themselves to health and well-being, they do not necessarily foreground aspects of the therapeutic frame and therapeutic relationship in the same way that occurs in counselling and psychotherapy. My aim is to further understand the practice and therapeutic process of counselling and psychotherapy outdoors, exploring how important dimensions of the therapeutic frame, therapeutic process and therapeutic relationship shift when taking therapy outdoors. In this sense I aim to contribute to the area of green care referred to in the report as 'nature therapy', drawing from particular models of mind and forms of professional practice which are especially relevant to conducting therapy in nature. At the same time it is important to acknowledge the common factors highlighted in the green care movement, and not to position counselling and psychotherapy in nature (although unique) as an exclusive activity. It is clear that many common factors may also be present for both client and therapist working in nature, not least of which are the plants, animals and landscapes (Sempick et al. 2010). Alongside this there is the solace that nature gives both parties, contributing to enhanced positive effects in areas of well-being, psychological states, spirituality, a sense of peace and physical health. The 'Green Care' report also highlights the multifaceted nature of green care, that the benefits of the natural environment on health and well-being are mediated by a number of different mechanisms which do not sit in isolation from one another. Sempik et al. (2010) propose that these mechanisms may be operating simultaneously and/or sequentially, a multidimensionality which poses a challenge to research processes, especially if they are seeking to isolate contributing variables and factors.

Redefining health and well-being: dynamic, relational systems

One of the important strands of the concept of green care outlined in the report is the redefinition of health and well-being, which is not solely based on the absence of disease or illness. Introducing the relative model of health (Downie et al. 2000), which takes into account the importance of the multidimensional and subjective processes inherent in understanding individual well-being and ill health, Sempik et al. (2010) position health as a dynamic interactive and unfolding process. These processes are interconnected through physical, mental and social factors. According to the relative model of health, the perceived state of health is a dynamic process affected by individual subjectivity.

When this concept of a subjective, dynamic and unfolding process of health is placed in a relational framework within a natural environment, mental health can be located in a systemic interactional process, situating a relationship with the natural world as central to mental health. Gregory Bateson, one of the originators of systems thinking, has written about the importance of seeing mind as part of a relational and ecological system. In positioning the mind in relationship to nature, Bateson (1972) concludes that instead of Darwinian species taxonomies as both the unit and battlefield of survival, the unit of survival is organism plus environment. Thus thought becomes intrinsically linked to its environmental context, becoming what Bateson terms 'an ecology of mind'.

> There is an ecology of bad ideas just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that the basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life, and everything gets into a peculiar mess. When you narrow down your epistemology and you act on the premise 'what interests me is me, or my organisation, or my species', you chop off consideration of other loops of the loop structure. You decide that you want to get rid of the by products of human life and that Lake Erie will be a good place to put them. You forget that the eco-mental system called Lake Erie is part of your wider eco-mental system – and that if Lake Erie is driven insane, its insanity is incorporated into the larger system of your thoughts and experience.
>
> (Bateson 1972: 484)

Bateson presents us with a relational model of mind–nature communication, in that one does not make sense out of the context of relationship to the other. Next I will look at some of the theoretical perspectives that attempt to explore the importance of psychological connection and disconnection to the natural world, and the effects that this has on mental health.

Ecopsychology: the restorative power of mind–nature communication

One of the starting points in attempting to understand human–nature relationships in the form of ecological communication is the idea of *miscommunication* between humans and nature, leading to distress for humans, non-humans and ecological systems. The fields of scientific ecology and psychological understanding both need a meeting place, a space where ecological communication between mind and nature can emerge between disciplinary ideologies. The deep ecology movement originating from the ideas of Arne Naess (1973) proposed a move away from a shallow instrumental version of ecology, what Naess referred to as 'man in environment', towards the idea of a 'total field' of relationships. Deep ecology has had an impact on much ecopsychological theorising (Seed et al. 1993; Macy 2007). It is this meeting place which serves as the basis for placing humans back within the ecosystem and developing a sense of self in relation to this; what has been termed by some as an 'ecological self'.

One argument put forward by ecopsychology (Roszak et al. 1995) is that human psychopathology increases the more we find ourselves distanced from the environment. The more this ecological miscommunication persists, the more ecological systems seem to be in disarray, as evidenced by growing concerns about climate change and how this may affect (and is affecting) planetary ecological systems. Kidner (2007) has argued that the increasing rates of depression, a growing worldwide public health concern, are a direct result of a growing disconnection from the natural world. Beginning with industrialisation, our concepts of self and identity have shifted to fit a growing dislocation from land, agriculture, seasonal processes and fluxes; and the resultant individualisation and materialistic value system leaves us, Kidner argues, with an increasing sense of anxiety and depression.

Ecopsychology has attempted to position the psyche as both needing to connect with the environment and suffering from the results of this disconnection. Ecopsychology exists at the interface between several different disciplines which themselves have radically different epistemological and ontological foundations. Ecopsychology finds a home within psychology, environmental philosophy, ecology and environmental activism; although its relationship to psychology is a complex one, as it sits between a humanistic/transpersonal paradigm (Schroll 2007; Greenway 2010; Metzner 1995; Reser 1995) and a more experimental paradigm advocated by branches of conservation and environmental psychology (Reser 1995; Clayton and Myers 2009). However, psychology as a field is contested, with several competing ideas and paradigms. One of the central tenets of ecopsychology is the articulation and examination of the emotional and psychological relationship with the natural world, and the reciprocal effects of human and natural world interaction. The fundamental challenge that presents itself to ecopsychology is to locate the human 'mind' in some form of relationship with the natural world and to understand this relationship as reciprocal.

There is a long history of articulating the field of ecopsychology, from a number of writers (Boston 1996; Schroll 2007; Scull 2009; Greenway 2010). However I especially want to locate ecopsychology within complex systems of thought which are emerging at this time in history. Ecopsychology will benefit from being understood in relationship to the pre-modern, modern and postmodern systems of thought which have forged its birth. However finding a 'core' language to represent ecopsychology as a unified discipline is problematic, and it might best be seen as a location for thought, language and practical action that is attempting to articulate the human–nature relationship.

Roszak's initial vision for ecopsychology sought to place the psyche back into the context of the earth, 'the physical matrix that makes living intelligence possible' (Roszak 1992: 320). He outlines some of the principles of ecopsychology, arguing that life and mind emerge via evolution within an unfolding sequence of the physical, biological, mental and cultural systems; and proposing that the core of the mind is the ecological unconscious, a place where inherent reciprocity and connection to the natural world exist as the core of our being and through industrialisation have been repressed, resulting in madness and rampant ecological destruction. Roszak acknowledges that the idea is 'speculative', but no more so than the rest of the field of psychology (Roszak et al. 1995: 14). In linking ecopsychology to psychotherapy, Roszak states that:

> Just as it has been the goal of previous therapies to recover the repressed contents of the unconscious, so the goal of ecopsychology is to awaken the inherent sense of environmental reciprocity that lies within the ecological unconscious. Other therapies seek to heal the alienation between person and person, person and family, person and society. Ecopsychology seeks to heal the more fundamental alienation between the person and the natural environment.
>
> (Roszak 1992: 320)

Human development and nature

By taking an evolutionary perspective on human–nature relationships, Shepard (1982) attempts to historicise aspects of how humans have become disconnected from nature. He sees a form of ontogenetic crippling as evolving with the birth of agriculture – a crucial point at which he believes humans created a false sense of separation from the natural habitat. Recent writing by authors such as Louv (2008) has posited the idea of 'Nature Deficit Disorder', aping criteria from psychiatric diagnosis, to argue that children are suffering from a deficit of contact with the natural world. A recent campaign by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK looking at children's connection to nature, based on a questionnaire measure developed by Cheng and Monroe (2012), found that just one in five children in the UK felt connected to nature.

Searles (1960) proposed that although essential psychodynamic concepts were contained within Freud's writings, he failed, as have subsequent others since, to explicitly acknowledge the significance of the non-human environment in the development of human psychological life. Searles raises the importance in infant development of the relationship with both the mother and what Searles terms the 'non-human environment':

> the human being is engaged, throughout his lifespan, in an unceasing struggle to differentiate himself increasingly fully, not only from his human, but also from his non-human environment, while developing, in proportion as he succeeds in these differentiations, an increasingly meaningful relatedness with the latter environment as well as with his fellow human beings.
>
> (1960: 30)

Barrows (1995) argues that a new theory of child development must be evolved, taking into consideration that the infant is born into not only a social but an ecological context. It seems that counselling and psychotherapy need to consider a more complex way of understanding development and life as embedded in multifaceted environments, both human and non-human, and that this is linked to understanding and treating emotional and psychological distress. Developing this further, some forms of psychotherapeutic intervention, most notably ecotherapy as the applied practice of ecopsychology, see reconnective ecological communication, i.e. fostering a reciprocal relationship between person and planet, as the central focus of counselling and psychotherapy.

Reconnective ecological communication

The idea that we can 'reconnect' to something we have lost in terms of our ability to communicate ecologically is a dominant theme in several writings in the area of ecopsychology, and ecotherapy in particular (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009). It seems to strongly suggest that a pre-modern world with a pure and reciprocal ecological communication with nature and the non-human has been lost or disrupted. The idea and image of indigenous peoples living a way of life that is in connection with the natural world becomes an ideal for ecopsychology and positing an ecological self (Roszak et al. 1995).

The ideas underpinning reconnectivity can be traced back to the Romantic Movement. As a reaction to the industrial revolution and the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the Romantic Movement as espoused by writers such as Wordsworth sought to offer an antidote to what was perceived as the deadening effect of modernity (Bate 1991). Drawing from these ideas, either implicitly or explicitly, ecopsychology has argued that modernity and industrialisation have had a deadening effect on the self and a destructive effect on the natural world.

Jung (1989) was convinced that the earth is sentient, a living entity, stating that we are not only upon the world but the earth is within us. Along with many others,

Jung struggled to find the language to express this connection because of its subtlety. Crediting the idea to Lévy-Bruhl (1921/1926), Jung (1921/1971) uses the term 'participation mystique' to describe how indigenous peoples do not distinguish themselves sharply from the environment, believing that what went on outside also went on inside of the self, as captured in much mythology. Tacey (2009) picks up Jung's ideas in discussing the 'sacred' nature of the earth, identifying three stages in the trajectory of the mind's disconnection and reconnection to nature. The first stage Tacey suggests is pre-modern literalism and supernaturalism, the belief that there are spirits of the earth in the form of forces which require the mediation of shamans and priests. This animistic stage has been represented by modernity as irrational and anthropomorphic, the projections of an irrational mind seeking to understand the mechanisms of the earth that have been thoroughly worked out by the scientific processes of modernity. The second stage, which I will call modernity, and Tacey refers to as modern disbelief and scepticism, sees the animistic paganism of the pre-modern systems of ecological communication as arising from disturbed infantile, unenlightened minds. The last stage in the disconnection from the earth is an attempt at reconnection in the form of the 'post-rational vision'. This stage, argues Tacey, is the most difficult to achieve as we need to move on from our modernist scientific roots which dominate the way we perceive nature. It involves a re-evaluation of fantasy, imagination and projection, sorting out the personal from the archetypical, the idea that 'land' in its vibrancy may be affecting us in all sorts of ways that we are unable to articulate.

The idea of 'nature' as animate, containing transpersonal forces mediated through reconnective practices which break down the duality of mind and nature, can be seen in particular forms of therapeutic process in nature. The work of Foster and Little (1983, 1989, 1992, 1998) focuses on the process of the vision quest as a mechanism of psychological change. Their work draws from rites of passage models known to traditional cultures as ways of negotiating life stages (Van Gennep 1960). The modern-day vision quest advocated by Foster and Little (1983) places the individual within a wilderness environment without food or shelter for a solitary three- or four-day experience of aloneness. This experience is then shared with others in a group process in order to make meaning and gain a 'vision' or life purpose that is contextualised as part of a process of transition for that individual. I participated in an experience such as this (Jordan 2005) and suffered from a profound depression subsequent to returning from the process. One of the main problems is the cultural context within which this form of experience and process is understood. Something which made sense to the plains Native Americans (Black Elk 1972) does not contextualise within a late modern culture. Remembering one's connection to the natural world as essential to 'coming home', does not easily translate to contemporary urban life. For me, any therapeutic experience in 'nature' needs to be movement between different spaces of an individual's life, not a jarring dislocation between one extreme and another, the urban and the wilderness environment, in the hope of returning to a pre-modern fantasy of ecological communication. At worst some of these experiences are no more than a psychological

one-night stand with nature, not properly contextualised and situated within a person's life and cultural framework. However, the need to set up reconnective process with natural phenomena is arguably vital to both emotional and mental well-being and forms a strong thread within reconnective ideas and practice.

Writers such as Metzner (1995) argue that we need to recover our ancestors' capacity to empathise and identify with non-human life, using ancient traditions of initiation and ritual celebration to develop an ecological literacy. What Metzner points to represents a strong strand in ecopsychological thought and practice, the sense of reconnection to something lost, with the pre-modern being the place where this perfect connection and reciprocity existed between the natural world and humans, and what we need to recover. A particular form of ecological connection is advocated which suggests a strong pull to move backwards to a pre-modern form of ecological communication with the natural.

The ecological connection to the earth in the form of reconnective and transpersonal practice points towards one of the central challenges of ecological communication: that contact with nature feels real and is experienced on several different levels concurrently, yet when we seek to articulate it, 'it' can remain elusive. Tacey (2009: 49) says it can be 'felt but not reasoned' and points us towards the nature–mind–experience connection that remains quite elusive if we have to rely solely on thought, language and reason to explain its affect. The problem is in attempting to use a modern mindset to both explain and articulate this connection. We are in danger of romanticising the pre-modern (as seen in films such as *Avatar*: Cameron 2009), seeking reconnection to something we have fundamentally lost and are hoping to recover. It seems to reduce the possibility of forms of ecological communication more suited to and understood in late modernity.

Human–nature relationships – what is nature?

Before we can begin to explore the practice and process of counselling and psychotherapy in natural spaces, we have to examine how the natural environment was separated from psyche (and culture) in the first place. It is important to understand how we have positioned ourselves as beings with interiors who view exteriors, and how these exteriors were positioned as something extrinsic to the selves who viewed them. This position for the psyche has fundamental implications for theories of counselling and psychotherapy and in some sense forces us to re-imagine what therapeutic practice and process would look like when we move outdoors. From my review of the literature on nature-based therapies (outlined in Chapter 2), quite often the question of what actually constitutes nature is ignored or touched upon without a deeper engagement with some of the philosophical and psychological problems that arise in addressing the question.

The first problem is how the natural environment is understood and defined. My definition takes into account the context of where counselling and psychotherapy, as it is practised by therapists, might take place. These are: nearby nature (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989) and more remote nature in the form of wilderness (Macfarlane 2007; Marris 2011). However it is important to note that the concepts of 'nature' and 'wilderness' are quite problematic and our understanding of these concepts has shifted throughout history, especially in relation to culture and technological development. Recent writing contests the idea of nature as a uniform concept, stating that it is impossible to situate it as a singular entity (Macnaghten and Urry 1998). Nature has emerged historically through its articulation in the natural sciences (Latour 1993) and through the practices and economic developments of modernity (Bluhdorn 2001).

Soper (1995) says that the concept and use of the word 'nature' have become ubiquitous and it is employed with such ease and regularity that it defies definition. However, nature has also become a vehicle through which various ideologies and paradigms are at work and in conflict with one another. Soper (1995) says that in recent times it has come to occupy a political place as a result of the ecological crisis, becoming a concept through which we are asked to re-think the use of resources, relationships to other life forms and our place and responsibilities within a wider ecosystem. Nature exists between the discourses of ecology and recent theory in cultural and critical studies. Soper says that this distinction is not neat and clear, in that it is both subject and object and the two are not easily negotiated and separated, quite often overlapping and folding back onto one another.

Taking a postmodern approach to understanding nature, Anderson (2009) defines it as an 'emerging postnature'. Following from Latour (1993) and Whatmore (1999), Anderson states there has never been an ontological separation between humans and nature, that the idea of 'pure' nature outside of society is a fallacy. He argues that, in a world of merging and emerging ontologies, the concepts of nature, culture and mind can never really be positioned as distinct entities, separate from one another. The world and those who move within it all change over time, both immersed in one another and emergent at the same time. In these merging and emerging movements we do not find a distinct 'mind' coming into contact with a distinct 'nature' through a distinct 'culture'. Anderson goes on to say that:

> Postnature is therefore not simply a locking together of separate entities within a passive context rather it is a convergence of mutual interaction and interference involving humans, non-humans and place. The meaning of any human or non-human species in this assemblage can thus only be marginally known if taken in isolation.
>
> (2009: 123)

As nature and human minds have traditionally been separated, how do we resist the urge to constantly split the world into binary forms in order to deal with its otherness, to negotiate the interior and exterior domains? There is an inevitability to the dualities that we create through thought and feeling that lead to action and the development of cultural forms and representations of nature and the environment. How do we find the space in between? Morton offers us *The Ecological*

Thought (Morton 2010), where reality is devoid of reified, rigid, or conceptual notions of subject and object, inside and out, so that we exist in an infinite web of mutual interdependence where there is no boundary or centre (Morton 2007: 23). Indeed, says Morton, all this conceptual boundary making is part of the problem.

I have proposed elsewhere (Jordan 2012) that arguing for a unified self in relation to a unified nature is perhaps illusory given the time we live in, and instead would support an argument for an emerging 'post-nature' (Anderson 2009) and a more distributed and disrupted self. I much prefer the term 'natural space' to nature, because the term natural space denotes that there are different spaces, some containing a greater volume of natural processes and materials, e.g. forests and mountains, and some containing both natural and man-made features such as local parks and woodlands. None the less there are some real issues to be engaged with in counselling and psychotherapy in relation to the environmental crisis, and a therapeutic rationale driven by these concerns needs to be carefully thought out.

The danger in taking a postmodern approach to the question of what is nature is that issues in relation to the material aspects of nature and its physicality potentially get lost alongside a deeper and more profound understanding of the force driving nature, growth and evolution. Nature is not just a 'text'; there is something corporeal and material that needs to be accounted for and understood as part of the complex relationships between humans and nature in a post-natural world. Next I outline certain philosophical strands in order to understand nature as both material and semiotic, concrete and yet a process, vibrant and vital in its capacity to affect the humans who interact with it.

Nature as a process of becoming

Philosophies of becoming are linked to the ideas of process philosopher A. N. Whitehead and the geophilosophies of Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 1994), and more recent attempts to find common ground between these theorists in the form of 'becoming' (Faber and Stephenson 2011; Connolly 2011). Both offer a way to re-imagine human–nature relationships as movement and immanent unfolding. This allows us to move beyond the position favoured by Cartesian-influenced thinking of a separate mind and a separate nature, which leads us down a path of binary dualities. These spaces of subject and object are at once both material and subjective, semiotic and objective. Philosophies of becoming allow us to challenge the idea of subjectivity and nature as fixed locations somehow separate from one another which need to be re-joined in order to form an ecological self. For those of us who find ourselves at this time in history, the notion of subjectivity and nature as fixed points does not capture the spatiotemporal flux of both of these positions within modernity, postmodernity and globalisation. Climate change positions us in a complex web of global inter-relationships, which are biotic, political, scientific, subjective and above all emotional and psychological. An ecological subject has to find their bearings amongst all of these complex flows and relations.

Whitehead's process philosophical position (1920/2004, 1978) presents a relational theory of matter, where the 'object' observed is the attributes it possesses in relation to space. Whitehead (1920/2004) proposes a revision of the subject–object split into a process philosophy that sees things as existing in relationships within particular forms, which in themselves are context-dependent on the perspective of the viewer and relationships between attributes of substances, spaces and times. Thus his philosophy is a process theory of relationships between entities in time and space, viewed from the interpretive stance of the observer.

> Accordingly it would seem that every material entity is not really one entity. It is an essential multiplicity of entities. There seems to be no stopping this dissociation of matter into multiplicities short of finding each ultimate entity occupying one individual point.
>
> (Whitehead 1920/2004: 22)

Sense awareness becomes important in our relations to nature; this is an area both independent of, and related to, thoughts about nature. Whitehead believes our sense perception about nature is disclosed as a complex set of entities whose mutual relations are expressible in the heterogeneity of thought and sense awareness. For Whitehead there is a problem of homogeneity in our relations with nature, which through our doctrines of science have caused a bifurcation of nature and mind. Nature is a 'complex of fact', a heterogeneous experience of 'events' in motion. Whitehead (1978) calls these events in motion 'actual occasions', in that there is nothing behind things to make them more real; their reality comes through in the process of the becoming of actual occasions. In this sense nature loses its static material quality as positioned by dominant modes of scientific thought. Isaac Newton, argues Whitehead, fell into the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness'. So the physical world becomes bound together not by laws, which Whitehead argues are not always followed clearly anyway, but by a general type of relatedness, a process of becoming, rather than the concrete end point positioned as material reality.

Vitalism: the position of matter and materiality in mind–nature communication

As a concept, vitalism originated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Fraser et al. 2005). Its central premise was that life cannot be explained by the mechanistic processes advocated in certain forms of scientific and biological theorising, in particular Darwinian, Newtonian and Cartesian. Calkins (1919) outlines some of the fundamental differences between mechanism and vitalism. Mechanism, she argues, describes the universe in structural terms; vitalism in contrast explains the universe in terms of relations. Because of its emphasis on structure and function, mechanism is deterministic, whereas vitalism conceives of an incalculable and

unpredictable controlling force or entelechy, moving the organism to some sense of fulfilment. In applying vitalistic ideas to psychology, Calkins challenges the mind as purely material and mechanistic; rather being psychologically vitalistic, it is fundamentally personalistic and understands the universe in terms of relational processes and is conscious in these terms. Consciousness of nature comes in the form of a personal relationship not solely reducible to materiality or mechanistic cause and effect processes.

Hans Driesch's original classic on vitalism, *The History and Theory of Vitalism* (1914), discusses some of the central premises of vitalism, the idea that life has a purposive or teleological drive. Driesch sees a special kind of teleology at work within the realm of organic life, that there is some underlying driving force in things. In viewing life in purely mechanistic and material terms we are led through what Driesch refers to as 'static' or 'descriptive' forms of teleology, leaving us with the question of an un-analysable autonomy. As a solution, Driesch proposes a dynamic teleology; foregrounding the notion of a vital entelechy; we are led to a doctrine of real organic 'becoming'. Driesch states that vitalism explains the essential difference of the 'life' machine which appears as something different from the technical machine. Life is a series of relations moving forwards in an unfolding process of becoming, driven by a life force, which is not reducible to mechanistic or purely material explanations.

Vitalism as a theory became deeply unfashionable and discredited, with mechanistic and material explanations dominating the understanding and explanations of organic matter and the way it functioned. But vitalism has re-emerged in the social sciences in recent decades, driven by a concern to understand ideas such as complexity and uncertainty, the hybridity between organic and machine and the evolving processes of information technology and the world wide web. Lash (2006) says the notion of 'life' has always favoured 'becoming' over just 'being', action over structure, the flow and flux. Vitalism, Lash argues, always presumes an emergent form. In the return to vitalism as an underpinning idea used to explain life, the senses become important, an experiencing based on a sensate connection as a form of knowing. This can especially be seen in David Abram's book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, narrating the author's sensate connection to nature, and other forms of nature writing (Abram 1996).

Colebrook (2010) says that systems designed to enhance life, such as modern medicine, can often develop into alienating and monstrous forms, e.g. rats with human ears growing on them in order to aid medical advancement. This leaves us feeling alienated and deadened, cut off from our feelings and senses. Colebrook proposes that vitalism as an idea is appealing because it is overwhelmingly organic and committed to a deeper sense of evolving meaning and purpose.

Another recent writer, Bennet (2004), has advocated a contemporary form of vitalism, proposing that we can account for matter in terms of the affect it has on humans, what she terms 'thing power'. Rather than a dead material space, things acquire power in terms of their ability to hold matter and energy in the spaces between inert matter and vital energy, between animate and inanimate 'and where

all things to some degree live on both sides' (Bennet 2004: 352). Bennet (2010) uses assemblage theory to explore the heterogeneous assemblages where humans and things interweave and assemble one another. This one-substance doctrine allows us to dissolve the Cartesian legacy of mind independent of nature; the entire universe is conceived of as a single space-time entity, which rather than being composed of discrete parts gives rise to fields which are located within it (Garret 2001). The idea that the material world is not separate from those who inhabit it, both linked together in an unfolding, interdependent relational process, has been picked up in philosophy. Here we can see where several strands of thought both in academia and beyond have been attempting to articulate how forms of mind–nature relations intrinsically shape one another.

Vitalism and geophilosophy

Geophilosophy is a position within philosophy that advocates that thought and earth are intertwined (Bonta and Protevi 2004). The idea of a geophilosophical position, a philosophy that relates to and is formed by the earth, can be traced back to the writings of Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 1994). Deleuze and Guattari's writings have been notoriously difficult to understand and decipher, precisely because they attempt to undermine facets of a concrete material reality as it has been previously represented in much natural and social scientific writing. They challenge notions of representation, instead arguing for production, rather than a transcendent reality where we can sit above concepts, and draw from stable theoretical groundings. They argue for immanence, and their emphasis is on emergent co-involved materiality and subjectivity (Herzogenrath 2009). Their ideas are not merely clever linguistic musings and metaphorical locations, rather they are an attempt to fully locate thought and earth in intertwined processes of becoming. They are important for re-imagining the reciprocal relation between humans and nature because of their emphasis on 'affect', in that an individual entity, be it a subject or a rock, can affect and be affected by other individual entities (DeLanda 2006). Chisholm (2007) proposes that Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* move us toward Bateson's ideas of an 'ecology of mind' (Bateson 2000). She argues that they are moving us away from philosophical notions of the transcendental, ideas that are deduced above the contingencies of the terrain of the earth. One of the central ideas of immanence is that it is contingent upon the complex processes of earthly life, entirely dependent on the self-ordering capacities of complex systems, not an extra-worldly source such as God (Chisholm 2007; Bonta and Protevi 2004).

The rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) is a way of helping understand two central themes of their project: the notion of multiplicity and that of heterogeneous thought. The rhizome is a concept taken directly from biology. Unlike tap roots which form trees and branches, what Deleuze and Guattari call 'arborescent thought', the rhizome is a subterranean structure which connects every point to every other point:

> it is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plain of consistency . . . Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between positions, the rhizome is made of only lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialisation as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature.
>
> (1988: 27)

In this sense we can see how thought is located in spaces, and becomes linked to the earth, not via branch-like (linear) thought structures, but via points in a rhizomatic assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari argue that systems of thinking which are linked to Cartesian and Newtonian thought, and which posit a concrete reality, are caught in an arboreal trap, locating subjects and objects, interiors and exteriors, within fixed tree-like locations. The intertwined conceptual and biological processes of the rhizome represent an understanding of the multiplicity. Within the Deleuze and Guattari notion of becoming (Delueze and Guattari 1988) we are always arriving, never fully settling. In this sense a critique of process ideas could argue that in this way of thinking we are unable to stop in order to be able to see anything stable and this can be quite unnerving.

In re-imagining the importance of the natural world for the human psyche and the potential for its therapeutic use in counselling and psychotherapy we need to deal with issues of the materiality of the outside natural world and its relationship to human subjectivity. Rather than positioning 'nature' as only discursively constructed, a danger of postmodern relativism, we have to make a methodological space that will enable us to think about humans and nature as co-existent and interdependent, mergent and emergent in relational processes.

Forms of vitalism in psychotherapy

This section concludes by considering recent writing in psychotherapy which has foregrounded the notion of vitality as important to mental health and well-being. Daniel Stern, who has written some seminal texts on the importance of developing sense of self through infant development and its relationship to psychotherapy (Stern 1985), has recently written on the centrality of forms of vitality to infant development and psychotherapy. Stern (2010) defines vitality as a manifestation of being alive and essential to human experience, something distinct from known physical, chemical and mental forces. Drawing from the original ideas of vitalism as a dynamic teleology, a moving unfolding and relational force of becoming, vitality is positioned as a constant sense of movement which maintains our sense of being alive. Rather than forms of internal mental representation driving action

and thought, action is based on feeling states, sensate connections of relations, and a dynamic unfolding of relationships between internal and external, between humans and the wider world around them (Ingold 2011). Stern (2010) proposes that dynamic forms of vitality provide a path for psychotherapy to access non-conscious past experience, including memories, dissociated experiences, phenomenological experience, past implicit experience never verbalised, and what he terms 'implicit relational knowing' – how we implicitly know how 'to be with' a specific other. Stern talks about our dynamic movement signature, the way we walk, talk, reach for things, all unique forms of individual vitality which have evolved from the general to the specific, in the moment-to-moment process of adaption and enactment. These vitality dynamics are crucial for the living organism to fit within its environment. Movement is important to our experience and is a primary and fundamental aspect of our animate evolution both individually and as a species. It is of course embodied but also arises out of other forms of dynamic movement, such as music as 'sound in motion', reading and hearing language, visual stimuli such as art and film, all of which we can experience as virtual worlds of forces in motion (Stern 2010: 20).

Stern makes a link to Gestalt thinking, seeing vital forms as a whole, rather than as separate entities. These are overarching terms which challenge the mechanistic reductionism of certain forms of psychological understanding. He also links vitalism to neuroscientific thinking, in particular theorising about the role of the arousal system which has a crucial role in the formation of unreflected dynamic experience. Stern makes a link to the arousal system and vitality, seeing arousal as a 'fundamental force' for all bodily and mental activity contained within the central nervous system. Stern links forms of vitality found in forms of music, dance, theatre and cinema to our arousal systems, which have an effect on us from moment to moment when listening to music, or over longer stretches of time, for example when watching a film.

Interestingly Stern makes no reference to nature as a form of vitality operating upon human arousal systems, but it is not too great a link to include nature in his forms of vitality as it contains elements which would affect arousal systems through visual, sensory and bodily states. We might also hypothesise about 'affect attunement' to natural spaces and link this to Ulrich's ideas about a psychoevolutionary connection with natural environments and stress reduction, and also to research coming from Japan about the effect of immersions in the forest on cortisol systems (Tsunetsugu et al. 2007).

In conclusion, Stern sees vitality forms as essential forms of interpersonal happenings: the infant needs much dynamic information to recognise how someone moves, gets angry or when and how the focus of their attention is directed; experience for the infant is multisensory. As mentioned previously, Shepard (1982) and Barrows (1995) have articulated the importance of sensate connection to nature in this process and its links to mental health. Louv (2008) also makes a similar point about the effects of a deficit of contact with nature in children. Stern's forms of vitality allow us to see the important clinical links for therapy about why contact

with nature is essential and how this links to vital processes of arousal within infants and adults as they grow.

Concluding comments

There is considerable evidence which supports the positive psychological and healing effects of nature upon the psyche. The growth of 'green care' over the last fifteen years is indicative of an emerging movement seeking to place our contact and engagement with nature as central to improved mental health. The growth in the importance of nature to well-being has given rise to the emergence of a new discipline: ecopsychology. Ecopsychology has been central in supporting ideas within counselling and psychotherapy which position nature as fundamental to revitalising and reconnecting humans within a reciprocal healing relationship to nature. In this chapter I have also outlined a philosophical position for nature which links it intrinsically to our minds and our sense of aliveness. This is important for understanding nature's role in revitalising therapeutic space and psychotherapeutic process.

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Chapter 2

The field of nature-based therapies

There is no one overarching definition of outdoor therapy, or a comprehensive model in terms of how to practise therapy in outdoor natural spaces. Over a number of years a 'field' of practice has developed in taking therapeutic work into the outdoors. Some of this field has had a long history, particularly in the United States in the form of adventure and wilderness therapy, and I will review aspects of this literature in terms of how theory and practice are understood. There have also been more recent developments in the form of nature therapy and ecotherapy, which draw upon ideas from ecopsychology (Roszak et al. 1995). Ecopsychology attempts to develop epistemological arguments around the nature of self and relationships to nature which have largely been ignored or under-theorised in psychology. It is these ideas which inform aspects of ecotherapy (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009) and some versions of counselling and psychotherapy in natural environments.

The most written about form of therapy in the outdoors is adventure therapy (Richards and Peel 2005; Gass et al. 2012). However a plethora of terms exist which attempt to articulate what therapeutic practice in the outdoors might be: wilderness therapy (Berman and Berman 1994), ecotherapy (Clinebell 1996; MIND 2007), nature therapy (Berger 2007), nature-guided therapy (Burns 1998), relational therapy in the outdoors (Santostefano 2004). There is a lot of work that defines itself as therapeutic but is not clearly counselling or psychotherapy as I would understand it, and so in reviewing the literature I will critically question what clearly has a grounding in counselling and psychotherapy practice and ideas.

I will initially outline three main approaches which have some grounding in counselling and psychotherapy and which will point the way forward in terms of what has already been articulated about therapeutic practice outdoors and some of the gaps that this book will attempt to address. In particular I want to address issues in understanding therapeutic practice outdoors, for example how to hold a therapeutic frame outdoors and different aspects of therapeutic process and relationship as they apply to counselling and psychotherapy outdoors.

The natural growth project – psychotherapy within a gardening context

The natural growth project represents a comprehensive attempt to write about the process of conducting psychotherapy in natural contexts, in particular within allotments and gardens. In attempting to write about the project, Jenny Grut (Linden and Grut 2002) stated that even after ten years of working with the victims of torture in nature it was very difficult to articulate the subtle healing effects of nature upon the human psyche.

In the project nature is seen as a medium for communication and a source of healing within the therapeutic work. Nature is regarded as an ideal medium for therapeutic work largely due to the demographic of the client group with whom the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture work. The client group is made up of those seeking refuge from their country of origin due to persecution for either political or social activities, having been subject to forms of imprisonment and torture resulting in psychological trauma. English is not the first language of the majority of the client group, and psychotherapy as it is predominantly practised in Europe, i.e. in a room, using language and psychological constructs to effect change, was anathema to the majority of participants. In this context the outdoors felt safe and the fact that language was not the primary medium for the therapeutic work was an important aspect in engaging people in the therapy in a non-threatening and supportive way. In this sense a room space is not always conducive to therapy for particular client groups.

In adopting a definition for the work that is defined as psychotherapy in a garden context, the approach is related to horticultural therapy but is predominantly focused not on gardening as a therapeutic occupation, but as a medium through which trauma can be understood and worked through. In working in a garden context, clients were asked to create things from the past which would help them come to terms with aspects of the trauma they had experienced. Trauma is re-encountered in the safe space of the garden, and the role of the psychotherapist in this process is to reflect experiences back to the client via contact with nature. Therapeutic work is carried out in a garden context and an allotment space, both containing rich material to work with.

Examples of this process consist of the use of nature as a metaphor for the human condition. In this sense the natural space is used 'projectively' in that the inner world is reflected back and encountered in metaphors that directly relate to client experience and can be worked with at a safe distance. For example, the relationship with plants and what they signify, particularly in relation to the client's country of origin, is used in the psychotherapeutic process to explore what has been lost from the clients' lives. The client's idealisations about the past and fears for the future are explored through the metaphor of growth and how things may develop differently in their new country.

The physical and aesthetic aspects of nature are important, in that smell, touch, sensate connection to the elements such as sun and rain, alongside the physical work of gardening, are all seen as part of a broad milieu of therapy. Linden and

Grut (2002) give examples of this where the physical work of weeding an allotment overrun with couch grass became for one client a process akin to pulling out the weeds he felt had grown in his mind and the rage he struggled to contain arising from his past traumatic experience. In methodically and patiently weeding his plot, the client engages with his rage and trauma and learns patience as part of this process. At the same time the client is weeding and repairing the damage he has done to his relationships, which is explored with the psychotherapist who works alongside the clients and engages in conversation as part of the practical and therapeutic work. By working in this way we can see how therapeutic work in nature has the potential to become more multifaceted with different forms of relationship coming into play between inner and outer reality. The therapist is not in one 'role' exclusively, but may be gardening alongside clients, whilst at the same time exploring feelings and thoughts in conversations which move between the therapeutic and the social. The psychotherapist loses the physical containment of the room space, therefore more emphasis is placed on psychological boundaries that are essential to good psychotherapeutic work, and the maturity of the therapist in understanding and negotiating different relationships and spaces. Linden and Grut (2002) describe how the therapist may be having tea and biscuits with clients and engaging in 'chit-chat' around therapeutic sessions. The therapeutic session may not be so clearly demarcated and may not last for the exact fifty-minute hour common to counselling and psychotherapy practice.

Some of these themes will be picked up in more depth later in the book when we explore the different facets of therapeutic process in relation to working outdoors and how this impacts upon the relationship with the therapist and what role nature plays in this. I will also look at the issue of holding a therapeutic frame in an outdoor context and some of the challenges and opportunities of this.

Nature therapy

Another attempt to bring therapeutic models to bear in relation to nature has been Ronen Berger's 'Nature Therapy' (Berger 2006). Nature therapy is a pluralistic approach to therapy, drawing upon a broad range of models such as art and drama therapy, gestalt and shamanism to articulate the model. In Berger's model, nature is seen as a live and dynamic partner in the therapeutic work, a third party in the process of therapy in the outdoors: nature as a co-therapist (Berger 2006: 268). Nature has a central role to play in instigating and mediating the therapeutic process, and is the therapeutic setting for the work, and therefore holds a central role in the relational dynamic of therapy (Berger and McLeod 2006). In contrasting this to a room environment, a space usually owned and controlled by the therapist for the purpose of therapy, nature therapy represents a more democratic space for the therapeutic work to unfold and therefore has an impact on the therapist–client relationship. Berger's research highlights how nature promotes a more democratic relationship in therapy, including the therapeutic alliance, hierarchy, authority and the therapeutic contract (Berger 2007).

Berger (2007) gives a clinical example of allowing a client to take ownership of the physical location of the therapy in order to 'build a home in nature', allowing the client autonomy in the process of how and in what ways he might build his home. The client constructs a therapeutic space that is very personal, using natural materials they find in the here and now. This is then explored in relation to the client's current issues. By developing a three-way relationship between client–therapist–nature, specific relational standpoints can be taken up by the therapist in relation to the work. The therapist may take a central role, as in traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, relating to nature as a backdrop or tool for the work. Equally they may take a role in the background of the therapeutic process which allows the client to work more directly with nature; as such the therapist acts as human witness, mediator and container for the work (Berger 2007: 6).

In linking the nature therapy to art and drama therapy, the use of metaphor and symbolism is central to the therapeutic process. Similarly to the natural growth project, both metaphor and nature's processes, e.g. a rain storm, provide rich material for analogies with life's challenges and existential dilemmas (Berger 2007: 7). Berger also positions nature as a sacred space for the therapy, and in this we can see links to shamanism and ritual which are central to his approach. This allows for the creation of a qualitatively different space than the mundane space of the client's life. This introduction of sacred and ritualised space allows for the client to explore facets of themselves not available in other areas of their life (Berger 2006; Berger and McLeod 2006).

Nature therapy outlines some important aspects of how, by incorporating nature into therapeutic practice, the 'space' of traditional therapy is changed. The relationship between therapist and client shifts in its power locus and becomes more democratic. Berger outlines some important aspects of nature's role in the therapeutic process and the dynamic relationship between therapist–client–nature, suggesting aspects of the therapist's stance within this which becomes more multifaceted. Some of the limitations of the approach are that Berger fails to articulate a meaningful discussion of practice issues, such as how to hold a secure therapeutic frame for nature therapy, and how to hold a therapeutic frame in a natural context.

Nature-guided therapy

In his approach, 'Nature-Guided Therapy' (Burns 1998), George Burns draws on the work of Milton Erickson foregrounding a more holistic idea of health at both a psychological and physical level, prioritising contact with the natural world to facilitate quick and effective changes. Erickson's approach pioneered behaviourally oriented approaches to psychotherapy alongside other forms of intervention such as brief therapy and solution-focused strategies. Erickson would often assign his clients tasks which involved interaction with nature (which has links with indigenous and traditional forms of healing; see Coggins 1990). These tasks involved the facilitation of the client's sensual awareness through contact with the

natural world. For example, someone suffering from mild agoraphobia was told to focus on a 'flash of colour' when outside. She reported seeing a redheaded woodpecker fly past an evergreen tree and this facilitated looking for further flashes of colour and the lessening of her agoraphobia (Rosen 1982, cited in Burns 1998: 15).

Burns says our senses provide us with contact with the natural world, and it is via this sensate experience that emotional experience can be triggered. He sees the sensory experience not purely as a form of knowing, but as a way of experiencing the therapeutic effects of nature via the senses. Burns sees the importance of multimodal sensual experiences as part of the therapy process: the stimuli that are offered by natural environments are very different from those of indoor man-made rooms. He sees sensual awareness in this multimodal form as part of a process of being with nature, experiencing a holistic biological and emotional fit. The approach is focused on brief behavioural strategies which Burns says are solution-oriented, client-focused and pragmatic, enhancing motivation and focused on wellness, encouraging choice and empowerment (Burns 1998: 22).

Burns sees nature as providing two central processes that can be utilised for therapy. The first of these is through the stimulation that nature provides via its ever-changing myriad forms; for example no two sunsets are ever the same. In watching a sunset we discover a range of emotional responses which can be brought back and worked with in the therapy. Alongside this, the engagement of our senses via nature is of fundamental value therapeutically and nature can provide a range of pleasurable sensations. Burns (drawing from Erickson's example) directs clients in forms of contact with nature, administering a therapist-initiated sensual awareness directive. An example is given of one depressed client struggling with relationships, who is directed that when her alarm goes off she is to go down to the river bank, watch a sunrise and focus on visual stimuli. She reports back feeling better having watched several sunrises. Burns says these sensual contact directives move clients from an inner-directed symptom focus to more pleasurable techniques that can facilitate vital life-nourishing energies, assisting towards peak experiences and promoting a sense of health (1998: 73).

In positioning the sensual as an important part of therapeutic engagement with the natural world alongside psychological engagement, Burns highlights some arguments that are around, particularly in the ecopsychology literature, that point towards modernity's emotionally deadening effect on the psyche and the senses. This 'deadening' effect may be at the root of some mental health problems (Kidner 2007). Burns's understanding of nature-guided therapy takes psychotherapy into a more multidimensional process of sensate connection to the natural world. By positioning this as a central part in the therapy process Burns contributes to an enhanced understanding of a multidimensional therapeutic process in nature. Burns offers a way forward in expanding notions of how counselling and psychotherapy might engage with the therapeutic benefits of living natural processes on an aesthetic and sensory level, and in this way foregrounding psychotherapeutic processes in nature which are more multifaceted and holistic.

Adventure and wilderness therapy

Adventure therapy focuses on the challenge of contact with the outdoors and is normally carried out in association with some form of activity such as canoeing, rock climbing, high ropes work or some other form of adventurous activity which becomes the medium for therapeutic work (Richards and Peel 2005). Traditional forms of adventure therapy have tended to work with at-risk youth and more treatment-resistant groups. Ringer (2008) sees a difference in the sort of client groups most adventure and wilderness treatment programmes cater for, those with antisocial behaviour problems, rather than clients traditionally seen for group-based psychotherapy.

Outdoor therapies such as adventure and wilderness therapy are predominantly carried out with young people, and one of the main therapeutic aims is to improve the 'self concept' of the person participating. In this sense the predominant focus is on psychological issues and the approach draws heavily upon concepts from psychology such as improving self-efficacy (Schoel et al. 1988). The focus on the psychological interiority of the person participating, independent of particular contexts, shares common factors with wilderness therapy (Berman and Berman 1994; Moore and Russell 2002), and outdoor behavioural healthcare (Russell and Hendee 2000), an approach helping adolescents overcome emotional, adjustment, addiction and other psychological problems. Ringer (2008) errs on the side of flexibility, ambiguity and generalisation in defining adventure therapy, seeing it as defying definition; rather its various forms can be found in adventure therapy programmes. He sees a number of key elements which programmes need to contain which then means they coalesce around the label 'adventure therapy'. These include the setting for the work as either outdoor or wilderness, adventure activities, spiritual/cultural elements, psychotherapeutic approaches and group and relationship dynamics. This broad definition has led to the development of a burgeoning field, but also to a lot of confusion about what constitutes 'therapy' in these programmes and what the role of the natural world might be. Indeed 'wilderness therapy' is often considered to be a distinct form of adventure therapy, where at-risk youth are placed in remote areas and physically challenged in terms of self-care and group process as a way of re-socialising them back into urban environments (Ringer 2008; Davis-Berman and Berman 2009). The similarity between these approaches has led to much confusion between terms, purpose and activity, leading to a lack of clarity as to the focus of programmes as therapeutic, educational or developmental. For the purpose of my research, how the therapists foreground the inner world of the participants and how this relates to the outer world is an important aspect of therapeutic work that needs to be taken into account when exploring therapeutic change and how counselling and psychotherapy might work in the outdoors. However, the idea of nature as a therapeutic space is under-theorised and accounted for in these programmes. Nature is seen as a place to be utilised, not as another meaningful relationship central to the therapeutic process. This has led some authors to criticise approaches such as adventure therapy as

failing to account for the therapeutic dimensions of nature contact in and of itself, arguing that because of the dominant paradigm of psychology, the healing effects of nature are under-recognised and incorporated into theories (Beringer 1999).

Greenway (1995) has pointed out what he sees as the considerable confusion in the use of wilderness for therapy and the difficulty the field has in articulating what might be 'the wilderness effect'. Indeed, Greenway asks, if in most forms of wilderness and adventure therapy interior psychological change (independent of the natural context) is the goal, why go out into natural areas in the first place if psychological change could possibly be best served in urban environments. Greenway (2009) argues that the central 'disease' of our late modern culture is the problem of the human–nature relationship and it is this that should be the central focus of any psychotherapy. Philosophically, the field of adventure and wilderness therapy seems to be caught in a split between mind and nature and where both might sit within dominant cultural and knowledge frameworks. It is my contention that this split reflects problems in the theoretical and knowledge bases underpinning adventure and wilderness therapy. The literature also fails to meaningfully discuss any issues of the 'frame' or boundaries which I see as central to counselling and psychotherapy practice (see later section for fuller elaboration), assuming these are an unproblematic part of the therapeutic work.

Horticultural therapy

Drawing upon research in environmental psychology that positions nature as important for psychological restoration and stress reduction (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989; Ulrich 2000), horticultural therapy places contact with plants and nature as beneficial to emotional and psychological health, reducing the stress of urban living (Ulrich and Parsons 1990).

A definition of horticultural therapy and therapeutic horticulture is given by Growth Point:

> Horticultural therapy is the use of plants by a trained professional as a medium through which certain clinically defined goals may be met. Therapeutic horticulture is the process by which individuals may develop well-being using plants and horticulture. This is achieved by active or passive involvement.
>
> (Growth Point 1999: 4)

As anecdotal evidence points out and research identifies (Ulrich and Parsons 1990), passive experiencing of plants enhances well-being and health, reducing stress and negative thoughts. It may be that this passive backdrop to therapy conducted in outdoor natural spaces provides a beneficial context for therapy to be conducted.

A more active engagement with plants through horticultural activities shares a lot of common features with the goals of occupational therapy (Palsdottir et al. 2013). These activities both have clearly defined clinical goals which are located within the context of a wider social care milieu. These goals might include the development of motor skills through physical activity, the development of cognitive skills through the process of comprehension, judgement and memory, as well as groups and social interaction as part of an overall treatment plan (Hewson 1994). The natural growth project represents a clear example of where the theories and practice of psychotherapy are applied to horticulture and activities both within a garden and within an allotment context.

Scandinavian healing and rehabilitation gardens

In Sweden in the 1990s a growing number of the population were succumbing to the effects of work-related stress and what was termed 'burn out disease' due to changes in the labour market. Interestingly Grahn et al. (2007) refer to 'burn out disease' as a form of 'vital exhaustion', an existential life crisis where people have lost touch with themselves and their abilities to cope. Specially designed gardens were developed with structured and unstructured elements, staffed by multi-disciplinary teams comprising a gardener, occupational therapist and psycho-therapist, alongside a psychiatrist, in order to aid people in their recovery from stress-related disorders (Sahlin et al. 2012). The model originated from a specially designed health garden on the campus of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Alnarp, Sweden. The two-hectare garden was designed according to theories on restorative and supportive environments with a focus on holism as an intervention. The garden was divided into different areas with various characteristics and structures, in order to meet the emerging needs and moods of participants during their rehabilitation. As part of the programme participants could use the garden freely according to their own needs and desires to support their rehabilitation process, which could be in the form of active or more passive experiences of nature (Grahn et al. 2010).

Further work and research has developed in Denmark at the Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning at the University of Copenhagen in a research project called 'The Healing Forest Garden Nacadia', the aims of which were to develop and practise 'nature-based therapy' in a specially designed healing garden and to conduct longitudinal effect studies (Corazon et al. 2010). Corazon et al. (2012) propose a model of nature-based therapy which incorporates aspects of mindfulness and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) within a permaculture framework, bringing together activities of both psychotherapy and gardening. Nature-based metaphors are implemented as a therapeutic tool in relation to activities and experiences. For example, issues of embodiment and concepts of self in relationships, as well as being in the present moment, are all incorporated into garden activities and processes. The Scandinavian healing gardens represent a practice-based intervention supported by ongoing research which takes our understanding of nature-based therapies forward.

Ecotherapy and ecopsychology

In some senses ecotherapy and ecopsychology are central to understanding psychotherapy in nature as they speak of the idea of a reciprocal relationship with nature that is central to mental health. Ecopsychology's core hypothesis is that the movement away from the natural world due to the conditions of industrialisation is at the root of human psychological distress, and this distanciation is at the heart of the rampant ecological destruction inflicted by man upon the natural world. Roszak (1992) argues that a psychological theory that does not address itself to this irrationality on such a grand scale is deeply flawed. Ecotherapy draws, particularly in the United States, on ideas from ecopsychology that propose therapeutic practices which seek to heal this split (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009).

Ecopsychology's fundamental contribution to the underpinning theory of counselling and psychotherapy in the outdoors is to place the split between psyche and the natural world as central to human well-being and subsequent distress. How the concept of the 'split' between mind and nature is theorised and understood is by no means unproblematic, especially in the way it presents nature and the natural, and also the complex relationship of where ecology sits in relation to psychology.

Clinebell first coined the term ecotherapy in his book, *Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth* (Clinebell 1996). Clinebell posits a form of 'ecological spirituality' whereby our holistic relationship with nature encompasses both nature's ability to nurture us, through our contact with natural places and spaces, and our ability to reciprocate this healing connection through our ability to nurture nature. In this sense ecotherapy has always shared a close relationship with ecopsychology (Roszak et al. 1995), placing human–nature relationships within a reciprocal healing (and disconnected and destructive) relationship with nature. Clinebell (1996: xxi) makes a distinction, preferring to use the term ecotherapy over ecopsychology, stating that ecopsychology is about the psyche and the 'greening of psychology', whereas ecotherapy focuses on the total mind-body-spirit-relationship organism. Recent developments, particularly in America, have placed ecotherapy in the role of 'practising clinician', viewing ecotherapy as 'applied' or clinical ecopsychology, just as psychotherapy can be described as applied or clinical psychology (Jordan 2009b). Ecotherapy is positioned as healing the human–nature relationship, and includes a range of therapeutic and re-connective practices such as horticultural therapy, 'green' exercise, animal-assisted therapy, wilderness therapy, natural lifestyle therapy, eco-dreamwork, community ecotherapy, dealing with eco-anxiety and eco-grief, and much more (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009). More recently the charity MIND published an evaluation report on ecotherapy (MIND 2013), which found that people's mental health significantly improved after activities in nature. The MIND report highlighted its own definition of ecotherapy, referring to horticultural development programmes supervised by a therapist or a simple walk in the park; this encompasses differing versions of what ecotherapy might or could be.

The book *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind* (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009) forms a challenge to traditional ideas of psychotherapy as conducted within an indoor environment abstracted from the context of nature and the outside world. 'Ecotherapy' is used as an umbrella term for nature-based methods of physical and psychological healing. Buzzell and Chalquist (2009) argue that it represents a new form of psychotherapy which acknowledges the vital role of nature and addresses the human–nature relationship. Ecotherapy gives a client permission to talk about a wider matrix of relationships that are important in their life, for example with animals or plants. Traditional therapy approaches have not tended to see these relationships with the more-than-human world (i.e. with nature and other sentient beings such as animals) as an important part of how the client's story and healing intertwine (Hegarty 2010).

Hasbach (2012) has written about some of the confusions surrounding the term ecotherapy. In the UK the term has come to be linked with green exercise and horticultural activities (MIND 2007) not necessarily anything to do with psychotherapy. However, Hasbach argues against the notion that just by going out into nature for a walk we are engaging in ecotherapy. She defines ecotherapy as a new modality of therapy that enlarges the traditional scope of treatment to include the human–nature relationship (2012: 116).

In this manner ecotherapy fails to fully answer fundamental questions I have about the human-to-human dimensions of distress, how these interweave with human and nature relationships and the subsequent distress caused by these relationships. The idea that urbanised, industrial society and its dominance and distance from the natural world are at the heart of our distress does not fully and meaningfully account for the developmental and relational processes that I experience in my psychotherapy practice. It is the human-to-human problems that seem to cause many aspects of most clients' difficulties. It is also interesting to note that suicide rates amongst farmers and others who live rurally are not significantly lower than those in urban areas, and in fact may be higher (Judd et al. 2006). Thus it can be argued that the relationship between internal and external worlds, between geographical location and mental health, is more complex than perhaps ecotherapy might have us believe. This leaves me with some questions: how might ideas from contemporary psychotherapy theory and practice interweave with ideas from the emerging fields of ecopsychology and ecotherapy? How might some of the practicalities of taking people into natural environments, which are utilised in forms of adventure and wilderness therapy, translate into psychotherapy practices which hold the fifty-minute session in a room as sacrosanct? Overall, how might we articulate the therapeutic effects of the natural world and our relationships with it?

Arts therapies: symbols, aesthetics and embodied experience

Arts therapies represent a movement in therapy away from a predominantly verbal dialogue with two people sitting in chairs. Arts therapies see the medium of the art form and expression of creativity as central to the therapeutic and healing effect of therapy. The medium of expression and its symbolic content are of central importance to the therapeutic process. Some forms of art therapy have gravitated towards the idea of art as a bridge towards verbal therapy, with others foregrounding the healing power of the art work itself, the aesthetics of experience and perception. The danger is that these two positions become polarised between the sensibilities of the artist and the psychological focus of the psychotherapist (Robbins 1994). Aesthetics is understood as the philosophical study of beauty in the form of art, taste, experience and its psychological affects. Robbins (1994) sees the 'beautiful' as what comes alive, where the inanimate becomes animate. So for Robbins what becomes beautiful in art therapy is in the art work itself or in the transitional space between the client and the therapist.

The land art movement (Tiberghien 1995; Kastner 1998) explores the aesthetic and reconnective power of art as it is embedded in the landscape. This kind of art literally makes art out of the raw materials of the natural space where it takes place and can be seen in the works of artists such as Andy Goldsworthy (2004). Goldsworthy's aesthetic could be described as a deep connection and understanding of natural space and place and how art can interweave with nature to represent a narrative of a living space. Art again here represents a pictorial narrative beyond just words and is an attempt to develop a language of human–nature relationships embodied in visual forms.

The arts therapies have foregrounded the importance of symbolic content through the medium of art, in the form of creativity, movement, dance, drama and music therapy, and its representation as a vehicle and a process via which both conscious and unconscious material can be understood. In expressive arts therapy 'art' is understood as a broad and plural multiplicity, characterised by any art making and considered fundamental to human experience (Knill 1999; Waller 2005). Use of symbolism and metaphor can be seen in the work of Ronan Berger (2006). His approach, 'building a home in nature', draws heavily from ideas and practices in art and drama therapy, but also importantly introduces nature as a 'third' in the process, an additional presence to the client–therapist dyad (Berger and McLeod 2006).

This idea of the aesthetics of experience and its psychological and emotional affects becomes more important in therapy in outdoor natural spaces because another element is introduced into the therapeutic process: the natural environment. In this sense we can see similarities with the arts therapies and how symbol, experience and process in the form of creativity become important either as a medium to access interior psychological material or on an aesthetic experiential level that is therapeutic in and of itself. The senses and sensory contact become more prominent in outdoor natural spaces in terms of the feel of air, warmth, touch, hearing and smell.

Frizell (2008) argues that creative arts therapies are, by their very nature, concerned with the expression of an inner world which transcends words. Frizell proposes that dance movement therapy leads us into the world of sensory perception, into a physical and spiritual expression through which our emotions flow; it is through embodied connection that we find connection as dynamic organisms to the diversity of a living world. This sense of an embodied experience beyond words which connects to wider living dynamic systems also seems an important part of understanding therapeutic process and how it might link to a wider living matrix in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy in nature. The importance of the aesthetic and symbolic in arts-based psychotherapy foregrounds the importance of the relational space of the therapy and the effect this has on participants.

Concluding comments

In this chapter I have explored the field of nature-based therapies. There are particular approaches to working therapeutically outdoors which provide a lot of useful insight, theoretical and case discussion, and can inform ways of working outdoors, not least of which is the growing field of ecotherapy. There are some specific areas in the literature that are not covered fully or in enough depth to support a therapist who, trained to work indoors, wants to understand the unique aspects of holding a therapeutic frame in an outdoor context and certain aspects of how the therapeutic relationship and process are affected by the move outside. These will be covered in the following chapters.

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Chapter 3

The therapeutic relationship and nature-based therapy

I want to start this chapter by positioning therapy outdoors within a broader understanding of counselling and psychotherapy, the therapeutic relationship and how change processes happen within the therapeutic encounter. I will also look at attachment to nature and the role nature might play in the therapeutic relationship, particularly the role it may play as a transitional object. One of the weaknesses of the literature on nature-based therapies is the absence of a strong and coherent link to mainstream counselling and psychotherapy approaches. The relational perspective draws upon a variety of ideas that are not related purely to one particular school in counselling and psychotherapy. Central tenets of the approach are the idea that psychological phenomena develop within a broad field of relationships, both from the past and in the present, and that experience within the therapeutic encounter is continually and mutually shaped by both participants (Bridges 1999). The approach draws upon ideas from self-psychology, psychodynamic developmental psychology, feminist psychology, and intersubjectivity theory.

The relational paradigm in counselling and psychotherapy

Relational psychotherapy states that well-being depends on having satisfying mutual relationships with others; the concept of a reciprocal mutual relationship is important for psychotherapy. The origin of emotional distress is often rooted in patterns of relational experience, past and present, which have the power to demean and deaden the self. The relational therapist tries to experience and understand the client's unique self-experience in its social/relational context and to respond with empathy and genuine presence. Together, client and therapist create a new in-depth relationship which is supportive, strengthening, and enlivening for the client; Mitchell (1988) sees the end result as the healing of disordered subjectivity. Within this secure relationship, the client can safely re-experience, and then find freedom from, the powerful effects of destructive relationships both past and present.

In relational psychotherapy the meanings given to experience, rather than any underpinning biological drives, become important in understanding the distress that the client is experiencing. The therapeutic process involves both client and